

The Love Guru on 34th Street

BY GUEST BLOGGER | WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 2010 6:39 PM ET

Story by Sabrina Mansouri.

Evolution is a spiritual experience. That was what it felt like as I watched several thousand people from every cross section of the United States and beyond, show up to get a hug from the 57-year-old Mata Amritanadamayi, better known to her followers as Amma.

She began hugging strangers at age 14, first on the streets of her village in Kerala, India, then later in living rooms around the world. Eventually, word spread about her message of unconditional love, and as many of her followers believe, the healing power of her embrace. Amma states, "I don't see anyone different from my own self. A continuous stream of love flows from me to all of creation. This is my inborn nature and my duty is to console those who are suffering."

Kelly Cutrone, of People's Revolution and the Bravo show *Kell on Earth*, happens to be Amma's publicist and was manning the communications table at the Manhattan Center, ushering notables from UN Executive Director Amir Dossal to Russell Simmons, Doug E. Fresh and fashion photographers Marc Baptiste and Terry Richardson.



Amid the bustle I met Dayamrita Chaitanya, Amma's right hand man and head of the San Francisco ashram. A tall charismatic Swami who is more rockstar than prostrating holy man we're used to picturing alongside a saint. A man Cutrone says she was willing to give up everything for and follow.

Swamiji serves as Amma's North and Central American emissary, but it's a life he had never imagined for himself. He met her 28 years ago as a filmmaker. What makes this story remarkable is that the orange clad Swami came to her as an atheist working on his documentary film exposing fake healers. He says that he went to see her in order to prove that she was a fraud. Instead, upon arriving to her ashram in southern India, he saw a miraculous healing with Amma licking a leper. From that moment he left behind the life he knew and found his spiritual path as a devotee. He has been serving Amma and the mission ever since, practicing compassion and service. He has helped build tsunami relief in India, administered aid in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti and has been instrumental in Amma's orphanages around the world.

Here are some questions I asked the Swami:

What is God?

What is not God. Everything is God that we see around us. The definition of God changes from person to person and their own understanding.

What is evil?

Evil is the negativity in our own mind and the actions based on those thoughts.

Is there life after death?

If you are fully living your life now, it doesn't matter if there is life after death.

What is beauty?

Beauty is what you see. If we are not present, we don't see the beauty.

Is there anything you would ever leave the spiritual path for?

AMMA